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What Does The Bible Say About Using A Person's Dead Name?

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What Does The Bible Say About Using A Person's Dead Name?

Society, particularly religious society, seems to have a hard time using a Trans person's new name. However, is there Biblical support for this prejudice? What does The Bible say about using a person's dead name?

It is tempting to think that The Bible has nothing to say about this issue. We often think that transsexuality is a new-age phenomenon. Therefore, we jump to the conclusion that The Bible has nothing to say about the issues that affect the Trans community. However, both assumptions are

wrong.

Transexuals In The Bible

Indeed, transexuals, or people who choose to change their gender, have always existed. In Biblical times they were called Eunuchs and often chose castration to achieve a better station in life. An Eunuch could work **in the house of powerful politicians and gain both power and wealth for themselves. (https://www.jstor.org/stable/2090872)**

In The Torah, Eunuchs are mentioned in Isaiah as servants in the king of Babylon's home. "And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon," **Isaiah 39:7. (https://www.christianity.com/bible/niv/isaiah/39-7)**

In The New Testament, Jesus speaks of Eunuchs. He says that some are born that way, some have it forced upon them, and some choose to become Eunuchs. "For there are eunuchs who were born that way; others were made that way by men; and still others live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it," **Matthew 19:11-12 (https://biblehub.com/matthew/19.htm)**.

The above examples, are only twice of the many times Transexuals are mentioned in The Bible. Transexuality existed. As the example from The New Testament shows, the Biblical world knew about people who chose to change their gender, and Trans issues were being debated.

What does The Bible say about using a person's dead name?

Having established that Trans people and their issues existed in the Biblical world, we now return to our original question. What does The Bible say about using a person's dead name?

What's In a Name?

The Bible, especially The Torah, is **filled with examples of name changes. (https://record.adventistchurch.com/2022/10/04/the-ten-bible-characters-who-received-new-names/) Cain becomes Seth (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/reclaimingthetruth/2024/01/did-adam-and-lilith-have-children/)**. Sarai becomes Sarah. Jacob becomes Israel. These name changes all have one thing in common. They follow a great transformation in a character's life. Usually, but not always, this name change occurs when G-d chooses the person or when a person returns to G-d.

The changing of a name after a major spiritual transformation makes sense, considering words and **names are believed to have power in Hebrew (https://aish.com/judaism-the-power-of-names/)**. A name captures the essence of our being and defines who we are, as a person.

However, some experiences in life are so meaningful that they change that essence. The experience changes who we are at a fundamental level. With that change must also come a change in the name that defines us. We see this clearly when Naomi returns after the death of her husband. She says she should no longer be called Naomi which means pleasant but Mara which means bitter.

We still do this today. We change people's names based on who they are, without even realizing what we are doing. The girl who makes everyone smile becomes known as Sunshine and the mischievous child becomes known as Trouble. Though we may not admit it, our subconscious knows that with a change in the soul so must come a change in the name.

What Does G-d Say About Using a Person's Dead Name?

Therefore, in each of the name changes that occur in The Bible, there are clear instructions about never using the old name again. G-d says to Israel, "… "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but [a]Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed," **Genesis 32:28-29. (https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2032%3A28-29&version=NKJV#:~:text=And%20He%20said%2C%20%E2%80%9CYour%20name%20shall%20** G-d changes Abram's name, he says, "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations," **Genesis 17:5. (https://biblehub.com/genesis/17-5.htm)**

Clearly, G-d is not ok with a person being called by their dead name. He doesn't just say now you shall be called Israel, Abraham, or Sarah. Rather he specifically says, "You shall no longer be called…" G-d understands that the transformation that has occurred in the person is so deep that the prior name no longer describes them.

Conclusion

If G-d, our creator, refuses to call us by our dead name or to allow us to be called by our dead name, how can we as mere humans justify doing this to another? When you call someone by their dead name, you deny the power their transformation has had on their life. To call one by their dead name is to describe their very soul and essence in a way that is not accurate. How would you react if someone called you a liar, but you had not lied? What if they called you a prostitute, but you have been a loyal spouse? You would be angry that the person was misrepresenting you. When you use the dead name of a Trans person, you do the same. You misrepresent who they are. You misrepresent their soul and essence. To use a person's dead name is slander.

What does The Bible say about using a person's dead name? The Bible is clear. G-d would never use a person's dead name and neither should we. A person "shall no longer be called" a name which no longer equates to their soul. A trans person has undergone a powerful spiritual transformation. Therefore, as their soul has changed, so must their name.

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